

A process of ennobling the soul with all its faculties and capacities, is carried forward. Graces of character are nourished and matured. The image of Christ is wrought gradually more distinct and more beautiful in the soul. It is in fulfillment of an intelligent plan, executed according to preordained laws.

Glorification is the culminating fulfillment of his gracious designs. The "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" is the heritage that is prepared for those whom he is preparing for it. It is the destination that he had in view for us from the beginning. Christ gave himself for the Church that he might present to himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

Sunday School

THE GOSPEL AT ANTIOCH.

Acts 11: 19-30; 12: 25.

Lesson for Sunday April 25, 1909.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."—Acts 11: 26.

SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q. 52. What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?

A. The reasons annexed to the second commandment are: God's sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the zeal he hath to his own worship.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M.—Acts 11: 19-30; 12: Th.—Luke 10: 17-24.
T.—Matt. 10: 16-23. F.—1 Thess. 1.
W.—Matt. 28: 16-20. S.—Acts 4: 32-37.
S.—Rom. 12: 1-15.

TOPICAL OUTLINE.

A Great Church Founded—

The revival in Antioch, vs. 19-21.

What Barnabas finds there, vs. 22-25.

Christians in name and in deed, vs. 26-30.

LESSON COMMENT.

It will be well at this time, before entering upon this lesson, to review some New Testament facts as to the proclamation of the Gospel. When Christ came to earth there were three principal nations with different national hopes, ideas, purposes. The Jew was living in the past, the man of tradition, hoping for the Messiah. The Greek looked to the future and had an ideal humanity as his goal; while the Roman was the man of the present, glorying in power and delighting to manifest it.

When the inspired writers came to set down the essential facts of the life of Christ, the ideas of these three nations seem to have been kept in mind; and we have the life of Christ set forth from three different points of view by the writers of the synoptic Gospels. Matthew writes an account from the Jewish point of view presenting Jesus as the promised Messiah. Mark presents the Christ of power and hence appeals to the Roman; and Luke sets before us the ideal man and thus makes Christ attractive to the Greek, the man who is seeking the ideal.

When these appeals and the preaching of the apostles have gathered out of these nations the body of Christians, John near the close of his life writes the Gospel for the Christian and presents of Christ of the inner life, the Logos, the Revealer of the Father.

A study of the history of the early Church as given in the book of Acts will show that the preaching of the Gospel has

three distinct centers from which it radiates. First, Jerusalem, the Jewish center; secondly from Antioch, the Greek center, and lastly, from Rome, the Roman center. Of course there is overlapping but in each center the dominating ideal are those given.

The work of gathering the people of God out of the nations is progressing. We have already seen that Christ gave to the Church in the beginning a definite program that was to be worked out. It was to be a campaign of testimony.

For a number of years the disciples did not grasp the idea that they were to go outside of the Jewish church to do their work. Now the events we have been studying have begun the work of giving them a different conception. God is preparing a great worker to be the chief Apostle to the Gentiles and the events of previous lessons have been opening the way for him. Paul essayed to preach at Damascus and at Jerusalem soon after his conversion, but the antagonism of the Jews prevented. During the years following when he was in retirement and preparation the movement towards the Gentiles had been going on and it had come from the right source, the Apostles themselves. The work is ready, and then happens one of those things that, humanly speaking, seems small, but means much for the bringing together of the work and the worker. When Paul was at Jerusalem he had been vouched for and protected by one Barnabas. The acquaintance lasted only a very short time.

Barnabas is sent to investigate the conditions at Antioch. Finding that the Gentiles have received the Gospel and that the work is larger than he can handle he thinks of the man he had known in Jerusalem and over to Tarsus he goes and prevails on Paul to come to Antioch and a work that is to mean great things for the world has been quietly launched. The work and the worker have been brought together. In a perfectly human way God's purposes are being carried out.

This city of Antioch which is to be the headquarters of the Church for a great time will repay study. While it is now under the domination of the Romans it was founded by the Greeks and is Greek in its ways and habits. At the time of the lesson it probably had a population of one-half million.

It had magnificent government buildings and the unique distinction of being probably the only ancient city to be lighted by public lamps. It was notorious for its wickedness. The grove of Daphne, situated near the city, was the scene of orgies, mostly in the name of religion, that are practically inconceivable to us of this time. So wicked was it that it was said by a Roman writer: "The Orontes flows into the Tiber." It was in this city that the work of preaching to the Gentiles really began. The Gospel does not seek the easy places. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost and his followers must do their work in that spirit. The events happening here at the time we are studying are interesting also as marking the beginning of Foreign Missions. Antioch is the first foreign mission headquarters of the Church. From it as a center the real work of evangelizing the world began. Our study of the city and its location will show how well it was adapted to this function.

It was here that members of the new sect were first called Christians. As has often been the case with names this one was first given in derision and it fitted so well and suited the needs of the case so well that it stuck. It has come in the course of the centuries to be one of the most used and effective of the world's terms. It has even come to be applied to the era.

That these early Christians soon caught the spirit of service is shown in their aid so beautifully extended to those in need elsewhere. This was a new thing in the times in which it occurred.

..Geo. D. Booth.